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The Selection Process for Veterinary Books in the General Medical School Library

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TWENTY-FIVE SCHOOLS of veterinary medicine in the United States maintain separately administered libraries or collections that are combined with medical school libraries [1]. The medical school libraries that do not have such collections available to them need a selection of basic resources in veterinary medicine to support preclinical departments with extensive animal care facilities or special courses given by the graduate school on animal care. Although basic book and journal lists for veterinary schools have been compiled by Kerker, Strom, and Blanchard [2-4], a guide for acquisition of a basic collection for the medical school library could not be located. The New York Medical College (Valhalla, New York), therefore, decided to survey medical school libraries on their selection process for books in veterinary medicine.

In August 1983 questionnaires were sent to 143 medical schools in the United States and Canada listed in the directories of the American Association of Health Science Library Directors and Medical Library Association [5-6]. Among usable questionnaires the return rate was 73% (105 libraries), although not all categories of questions could be tabulated. Unfortunately, the questionnaire did not differentiate between works in the SF schedule of the Library of Congress classification (Animal Culture) and the QL schedule of the National Library of Medicine classification (Laboratory Animals). It was intended that both schedules would be included for the purposes of this questionnaire.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey indicated that medical school libraries have an average of 171 books in veterinary medicine. As shown in Table 1, some 32% of the libraries do not have a documented acquisitions

TABLE 1
SURVEY OF SELECTION PROCESS FOR VETERINARY
MEDICINE BOOKS IN SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES
AND CANADA, 1983
($n = 105$ LIBRARIES)

Policy, Procedure, Practice	% of Respondents*	
	Yes	No
Have documented acquisitions policy	32	68
Feel need for a more organized policy	26	74
Have developed a core list of veterinary books	2	98
Faculty or staff assists in acquisitions	49	51
Collection is adequate for needs of animal care facility	76	24
Animal care maintains own sizable collection	30	70
Resource sharing has reduced number of books needed	49	51

*Figures are rounded to nearest whole number.

policy relating to books in veterinary medicine and some 75% did not feel the need for a more organized policy. Only two libraries (2%) had developed a core list of veterinary medicine books, both lists adapted from those of veterinary school libraries. Most libraries (75%) felt that their collections were adequate for the needs of their animal care facilities. Collections housed in animal care facilities were judged by 70% of the respondents as not extensive.

Approximately half of the respondents indicated that staff or faculty assisted in selection of books. One respondent found that not one faculty member had expressed any interest in veterinary books for the library within the last ten years. Resource sharing also reduced the need for extensive acquisitions in 50% of the libraries.

Thus, the survey indicated that medical school libraries do not generally have a formalized policy regarding the acquisition of books in veterinary medicine. Most are quite satisfied with their present method of consulting with faculty or staff, using publishers' recommendations, or approval plans and other conventional methods of selection.

The findings from this survey have implications beyond the acquisition of veterinary materials in the general medical school library. As there are presently no lists of titles in the allied health sciences that have been published as guides to

acquisition, perhaps there is a need for such lists. Although the respondents did not feel the need for developing a more formalized acquisitions policy, some 40% voluntarily indicated that they would find an acquisitions list helpful. This question will be tested when Brandon and Hill publish their first list of books and journals for allied health in the *Bulletin* this fall.

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